

**National Commission on Libraries
and Information Science**

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Highlights of the Year 2002

The National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) is an independent agency of the federal government established in 1970 to provide advice to the President, the Congress, and other entities, public and private, regarding the library and information needs of the American public. To carry out its functions, NCLIS conducts hearings, studies, surveys, and analyses of the nation's library and information needs, appraises the adequacies and deficiencies of the current library and information resources and research and development activities, and issues publications.

The year 2002 was a period in which the need for such an agency was questioned, but in the end, the continuing mission of the agency was clearly approved.

Congress reduced the Commission's budget one-third, from \$1.5 million to \$1 million, resulting in some personnel reductions and program cutbacks. However, NCLIS was able to continue routine operations, including providing advice on the reauthorization of the Library Services and Technology Act and Government Printing Office management and operations. It also moved forward on two new initiatives: first, *Trust and Terror*, a briefing on the role of libraries as communicators to the public in times following natural or man-made disasters, and second, planning for a global conference on information literacy.

NCLIS Members and Staff

NCLIS is comprised of sixteen Members – the Librarian of Congress, the Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), and fourteen individuals appointed by the President upon confirmation by the Senate. Members serve a five-year term (with an additional year allowable when a successor has not yet been named); generally, one-fifth of the Commission is replaced each year. The President did not nominate new Members during the period of reappraisal of the Commission's role; consequently, a large number of vacancies have ensued.

Martha B. Gould (retired Director of the Washoe County Public Library in Reno, NV) continued as Chairperson and she, along with Rebecca T. Bingham (retired Director of School Library Media Services in Jefferson County, KY), Joan R. Challinor, (historian and Chair of the Advisory Committee of the Schlesinger Library on the History of

Women in America; Dr. Challinor serves as NCLIS Vice Chair), José-Marie Griffiths (Professor of Information Science, Library Science, and Telecommunications, University of Pittsburgh), Jack E. Hightower (former Member of Congress and a retired Justice of the Texas Supreme Court), and Bobby L. Roberts (Director of the Central Arkansas Library System in Little Rock), served as Commissioners. The terms of office of Ms. Bingham and Dr. Griffiths expired on July 19, 2002. Winston Tabb, Associate Librarian for Library Services at the Library of Congress, continued to represent James H. Billington, the Librarian of Congress, until he took on the new role of Dean of Libraries at Johns Hopkins University. Dr. Billington then named Nancy Davenport, Director of Acquisitions for the Library of Congress, to represent him at Commission activities, succeeding Mr. Tabb. Robert S. Martin (librarian, library educator and former Director and Librarian of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission) is, as IMLS Director, a Member of the Commission *ex officio*.

Robert S. Willard, a former Commissioner, continued as the NCLIS Executive Director. Rosalie Vlach, Director of Legislative and Public Affairs, left the Commission in April, as a consequence of the budget reduction. By the end of the year, the two remaining members of the professional staff, Judith Russell, the Deputy Director, and Denise Davis, Director of Statistics and Surveys, were departing NCLIS. Ms. Davis, whose efforts had significantly improved the NCLIS Library Statistics Program, had taken a leadership position with the State Library of Oregon. Ms. Russell, whose library career included time as Director of the Federal Depository Library Program, returned to the Government Printing Office as the Superintendent of Documents (the highest ranking woman in that agency's history), responsible for GPO's sales and library programs. Robert Molyneux, a library school professor from the University of South Carolina-Columbia, joined the NCLIS staff to carry on the work of the Library Statistics Program. Madeleine McCain, with a background in marketing, organizational development, and training in the corporate world as well as experience running her own business, became the Director of Operations for NCLIS.

Members of the Commission convened twice in Washington in 2002. In June, they evaluated nominations for the National Award for Library Services and recommended exceptional nominees to the Director of IMLS. They also participated in a joint meeting with Members of the National Museum Services Board. In October, they reviewed ongoing NCLIS projects and attended the White House ceremony where the National Awards were presented by First Lady Laura Bush.

NCLIS Mission Reappraisal

In early 2002, for the second year in a row, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) proposed that Congress no longer provide funding for NCLIS. This proposal was accompanied with the suggestion that "other agencies" could perform the work of the Commission, although details were not provided how this reassignment would be accomplished. It was claimed that this move would save \$1 million (what amounted to one-third of a penny for each American). This proposal clearly seemed to reflect a lack of understanding of the unique role of the Commission to advance the national policy of

library and information services for all Americans that was articulated in the law establishing the Commission in 1970, P.L. 91-345.

In February, responding to an invitation from the Congress, Commission Chairperson Martha Gould testified before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, and Education. She refuted the proposal to eliminate the Commission and instead called for funding it at \$2.8 million, the level unanimously supported by Commissioners at a meeting in 2001. She also proposed minor technical amendments to improve the operation of the Commission. Chairperson Gould focused on the Commission's effort to improve school libraries as one example of how the agency accomplishes its work. Also testifying was Commissioner Jack Hightower, who addressed the need for information in the moments following an emergency or disaster. He provided another example of the Commission's work: the preparation of a briefing for public officials explaining how libraries can serve as trusted sources of information in times of crisis if the necessary planning and preparation has occurred beforehand.

In the more extensive testimony that NCLIS submitted for the record and in answers to follow-up questions that members of the appropriations subcommittee submitted to NCLIS, the case for the continued operation of NCLIS was put forward. A discussion of the legislative history of the Commission made clear the ambitious role Congress had in mind for the Commission. A thirty-year summary of Commission activities illustrated the breadth and depth of Commission concerns. An examination of the Commission's independence demonstrated the essential importance of having a body free of outside influence; such independence would certainly be lost if NCLIS's functions were incorporated into one or more "other agencies" as proposed by OMB.

Support for the Commission was articulated by a number of different groups. When America's librarians visited Washington in May 2002 to discuss library needs with their Senators and Representatives, the Commission's budget was among their priorities. Library associations and industry groups, as well as individuals, communicated with the appropriators in support of NCLIS. More than a dozen Members of Congress signed a letter to the Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee urging full funding of NCLIS at the requested level of \$2.8 million.

The Congress did not conclude its consideration of most funding bills until long after the new fiscal year began on October 1, 2002. Instead, temporary measures, bills known as "continuing resolutions," provided stopgap funding for most federal agencies, including NCLIS. It was not until the beginning of the calendar year that funding for FY 2003 was finally provided. For the second year, Congress rebuffed the proposal to eliminate NCLIS and instead appropriated \$1 million for the agency.

The beginning of the new year, 2003, brought additional good news for the Commission. OMB no longer proposed the elimination of NCLIS and instead recommended level funding, i.e. \$1 million, in the budget for FY 2004. Shortly thereafter, the Office of Presidential Personnel began the process of identifying individuals for appointment to the vacancies on the Commission.

Support for Executive and Legislative Branches

Because of the reduction in its budget, the Commission was unable to continue to examine government information policy as it relates to creation, dissemination and permanent accessibility of electronic government information. No further work was accomplished on the NCLIS report, *A Comprehensive Assessment of Public Information Dissemination*, which had been prepared the previous year and which recommended policies and procedures for strengthening the dissemination infrastructure of government information. However, the Commission did establish a working relation with Bruce James, the President's nominee to be Public Printer (the head of the Government Printing Office). Executive Director Robert Willard appeared at the Senate nomination hearing for Mr. James and submitted testimony from Chairperson Martha Gould in which she expressed the commitment of the Commission to work with Mr. James on information policy issues. In a separate matter later in the year, Mr. Willard filed a statement with the Office of Management and Budget regarding a proposed policy that was designed to allow federal agencies to procure printing from sources other than GPO, despite a statutory requirement to the contrary.

National Information Activities

Also owing to the budgetary reduction, the Commission had to reduce its activities regarding school libraries. NCLIS had examined the status of school libraries in an April 2001 hearing in Cincinnati, Ohio. The school library's roles in student achievement and in promoting literacy and information literacy were among the topics examined. The Commission deferred publishing the transcript of the hearing, *School Librarians: Knowledge Navigators Through Troubled Time*, which had been planned for 2002. However the transcript was provided to Robert Martin, IMLS Director, who reviewed it in preparation for a June White House Conference on school libraries convened by First Lady Laura Bush. Commissioner Rebecca Bingham represented NCLIS at this conference.

The Commission provided advice to the Congress on the reauthorization of the Library Services and Technology Act, the law that provides federal financial support to libraries throughout the nation. After the Education and the Workforce committee of the House of Representatives approved legislation, the Commission expressed its full support and urged the Senate to take similar steps. Later, the Commission also urged the House leadership to schedule floor action on the bill. (The legislation did not advance during 2002, but action is expected early in 2003 to reauthorize LSTA.)

A major effort was put into production of *Trust and Terror*, an audio-visual briefing on the role libraries can take to provide needed information to the citizenry in the immediate aftermath of a manmade or natural disaster. Under the leadership of former Commissioner Marilyn Gell Mason, Commissioner José-Marie Griffiths, and Commission Vice Chair Joan Challinor, NCLIS developed a script and a computer slideshow designed for librarians and their governing boards as well as other public

policymakers. This production was previewed before librarians in various organizations, such as the American Library Association and the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies, and was modified based on the comments received. A brochure to accompany the briefing was also prepared. Commissioner Challinor presented the briefing at a session of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) in Glasgow, Scotland and arranged for the brochure to be available in French and Spanish as well as the original English.

Toward the end of the year, renowned broadcaster Walter Cronkite recorded the narration for the *Trust and Terror* presentation and a more advanced computer presentation was produced. The production was recorded on CD-ROM with the intention to distribute the CDs in early 2003.

NCLIS/NCES Library Statistics Program

The Commission believes strongly that in order for policy advice to be useful, it must be based on solid fact. NCLIS has long maintained an important statistical function, and despite the overall reduced budget, this program was maintained at previous levels and even expanded into some new areas.

The Commission had a significant presence at several research and statistics committee meetings of the American Library Association and its divisions, as well as participation in a variety of state library conferences. NCLIS also continued its participation, first initiated in late 2001, with the European Union library statistics project, LibEcon. The Commission, through the participation of Denise Davis, also remained actively involved in US and international library standards activities.

NCLIS continued its support of *Developing National Data Collection Models for Public Library Network Statistics and Performance Measures*, a project co-sponsored by NCLIS, IMLS, and the National Information Standards Organization (NISO). NCLIS hosted a forum in New Orleans on January 18, 2002 to bring the information community together to work toward the common goal of consistent and meaningful electronic use measure reporting

Fiscal Year 2002 marked the fifteenth consecutive year of cooperation between the Commission and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in implementing the Library Statistics Program (LSP). The Commission serves as a liaison to the library community, organizes meetings and professional development workshops, supports in-state training and technical assistance, monitors trends, and advises NCES on policy matters.

The following events occurred as part of the continuing improvement of the joint agency Library Statistics Program: Steering committee meetings for the Federal State Cooperative System (FSCS) survey, March, June and September 2002; State Library Agency (STLA) survey, March and September 2002; Academic Library survey advisory committee meeting, January and June 2002; School Library Media Center survey task

group meetings, June and September 2002; and the annual training workshop and orientation for new state data coordinators, December 2002.

There were several landmark projects for the joint program. Foremost is the improvement of timeliness of reporting state-level data to the federal library data system. States approved a revised calendar for reporting data and moving the training workshop to the fall. These modifications improve the synchronicity of the processes between state collection and federal analysis and publication, thereby shortening the total collection-to-publication cycles.

The State Library Agency Survey Steering Committee undertook an ambitious project of analyzing LSCA and LSTA funding over a 10-year period. The working paper, *The Impact of Federal Funding on State Library Agencies: The LSCA to LSTA Transition*, was prepared by Bruce Kingma, School of Information Studies, Syracuse University. Its author concluded, "LSTA funding not only increased the amount of federal dollars that were available for library services but generated a significant increase in state, local and other non-federal support to state libraries."

International Activities

The Commission completed its 17th year of cooperation with the Department of State to coordinate and monitor proposals for International Contributions for Scientific, Educational and Cultural Activities (ICSECA) funds and to disburse the funds.

The Commission continues to be an active participant in the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). However, due to reduced funding only one Commissioner, NCLIS Vice Chair Joan Challinor, attended the August 2002 General Conference in Glasgow, Scotland.

The Commission continued to host a number of visits to its office by delegations of librarians from other nations, usually under the auspices of the State Department. Executive Director Robert Willard traveled to Minsk, Belarus, at the request of the State Department, to participate in the 80th anniversary celebrations of the Belarus National Library and to speak to a number of library groups.

NCLIS carried on its work in preparation for an International Leadership Conference on Information Literacy planned in partnership with UNESCO and the National Forum on Information Literacy. Information literacy is the ability to recognize when information is needed and to locate, evaluate, organize and use information effectively. It is believed that an information literate citizenry is a key component in national economic development.

The Commission originally hoped that a planning session of three dozen experts could be scheduled to take place in Prague in April 2002, but owing to both budgetary restrictions and serious flooding in the Czech Republic, the meeting was postponed indefinitely. However, the invited experts were all requested to prepare papers on various aspects of

information literacy, and these works are available on the Commission's web site. It is hoped that the meeting of experts will be able to take place in 2003. The output from this meeting will provide input for the World Summit on the Information Society, scheduled to take place in Geneva in December 2003; the invited experts will also sketch out preliminary plans for the proposed International Leadership Conference to be held in 2004 or 2005.

Publications

Because of the reduction in the NCLIS budget and the resultant departure of the staff person responsible for publications, the Commission, with little exception, did not produce printed publications during 2002. However, a number of documents related to the NCLIS budget and various programs were produced and made available on the Commission's website.

The following became available in 2002.

Fiscal Year 2003 Appropriations Hearing. (electronic: <http://www.nclis.gov/news/FY2003.Appropriations.Hearing.Compilation.withQandA.pdf> /). Also partially available in the printed record of the Hearings of the Subcommittee on the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies for 2003, Part 6, pp. 381-425, 485-513

The Impact of Federal Funding on State Library Agencies: The LSCA to LSTA Transition; Prepared by Bruce Kingma, School of Information Studies, Syracuse University. 2002 (electronic only: <http://www.nclis.gov/statsurv/surveys/stla/reports/StLA.Policy.Paper2.2002.pdf>)

Library Statistics Cooperative Program. 2002 (brochure) (electronic: http://www.nclis.gov/statsurv/LSP_Brochure_2002.pdf)

Trust and Terror, New Demands for Crisis Information Dissemination and Management. 2002 (brochure) (The brochure was produced in Spanish: *Confianza ...y Terror, Nuevas Demandas para la Disseminación y Gestión de Información de Crisis*. It was also made available in French: *Confiance ...et Terreur. Nouveaux besoins en matière de diffusion et gestion de l'information de crise.*)

Trust and Terror, New Demands for Crisis Information Dissemination and Management. 2002 (CD-ROM with accompanying brochure)

Generally, copies of NCLIS print publications are available free in limited quantities from the NCLIS office until supplies are exhausted. Electronic versions are available on the Commission's website. In addition, selected reports, hearing testimony, comments on various matters before Congress and the Administration, news releases, and other items are also on the website. Web: <http://www.nclis.gov/>